

May 5, 2020

St. Louis County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 and Dental Settings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies dental settings as having unique characteristics that warrant additional infection control considerations and places dental health care providers in the “very high exposure risk” category. The practice of dentistry as involving the use of instruments that create a visible spray that contains large particle droplets of water, saliva, blood, microorganisms, and other debris. This spatter travels only a short distance and lands on the floor, nearby operatory surfaces, dental health care professionals, or the patient. The spray also might contain certain aerosols. While surgical masks offer some protection, they do not guarantee safety against inhalation of airborne infectious agents. Additional study and evaluation is needed to assess the risk of transmission during dental practice or to determine whether dental health care professionals are adequately protected when providing dental treatment using Standard Precautions.

Here are some recommendations from the CDC:

- Postpone elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent dental visits.
- Stay at home if you are sick.
- Evaluate the necessary course of dental treatment by phone before responding to the office.
- Dental health professionals should utilize the appropriate levels of PPE.
- Clean and disinfect rooms promptly.

What constitutes a dental emergency? According to the American Dental Association (ADA), the following:

- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Trauma involving the facial bones, potentially compromising the patient’s airway
- Severe pain from inflammation
- Treatment prior to or following a procedure or surgery
- Final crown/bridge cementations if temporary restoration is compromised
- Gum infection with pain or swelling
- Broken or knocked out tooth
- Denture adjustment for people receiving radiation or other cancer treatment
- Snipping or adjusting wire of braces that hurts your cheeks or gums
- Biopsy of abnormal tissue

Dental health care professionals should regularly consult with their state dental boards or other regulating agencies for requirements specific to their jurisdictions.

Mental Health During a Pandemic

As a reminder, everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. Fear and anxiety caused by this pandemic can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. How someone responds to the outbreak can depend on their background, the things that make them different from other people, and the community they live in. If someone is feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like they might want to harm themselves or others, contact one of the following:

- Call 911
- Contact Behavioral Health Response (BHR): 314-469-6644 (immediate access to a counselor or social worker, free of charge)
- Mid-Missouri Crisis Line: Text “HAND” to 839863
- Disaster Distress Help Line: 1-800-985-5990, or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8225) or visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Dignified Transfer Center

The Dignified Transfer Center is currently accommodating 13 decedents. 36 additional individuals have been through the center and transported to a crematorium or funeral home, at the request of family. To date, 49 individuals have entered the Dignified Transfer Center.

Contact Information

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services hotline can be reached at (877)435-8411.

St. Louis County has created a website dedicated to the dissemination of information relating to COVID-19, www.stlcorona.com. Please visit that website or those belonging to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO) for the most current and reputable information.



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